

COMBINED WATCH REPORT
of the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

24 February 1966

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Conclusions

We have detected no Soviet Bloc military activity indicating preparations for offensive military action in the immediate future against the United States, its overseas forces or its Allies.

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We have no evidence to indicate that there has been any southward deployment of Chinese ground combat units.

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There are continuing indications that North Vietnam is moving men and supplies southward in support of a vigorous prosecution of the war in South Vietnam.

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I. Bloc International Developments

Soviet diplomatic and propaganda moves reflect continuing efforts to complicate relations between the US and its allies and to foster the notion that the US leadership is facing increasing opposition both at home and abroad to its policies on Vietnam. Soviet public media are attempting to depict mounting opposition from "an ever growing number" of people in the US to Vietnam policies and claim that the same is true among the peoples of US allies.

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III. Critical Areas

1. Communist China: We have no evidence to indicate that there has been any southward deployment of Chinese ground combat units.

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2. North Vietnam: North Vietnamese plans to continue a large-scale movement of troops and supplies into South Vietnam are indicated by the intensive and widespread effort to improve and expand the logistic routes through the Laos Panhandle. It has become apparent that an intensified construction program involving thousands of workers has been under way on these routes for some time. In addition to the construction of numerous bypasses and alternate roads adjacent to the existing main supply routes, work has begun on a new road between Route 911 and North Vietnam, about midway between Mu Gia and the demilitarized zone, which may be intended to provide a new route from North Vietnam into the Panhandle and thus relieve the present North Vietnamese dependence on the roads in the Mu Gia Pass area for truck movements. In the extreme southern Panhandle, a new road begun since 1 October from the Chavane area has been completed to within a few miles of the Cambodian border. [redacted] southbound truck movements in the Panhandle are averaging about 30 trucks per day, or about double that of last year. [redacted]

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In two recent articles in the party daily, North Vietnam has taken an extremely tough line on a political settlement of the war. The language of the statements is confident and bellicose, in contrast to reports of supply difficulties and sinking morale among the Communist forces in South Vietnam. [redacted]

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3. South Vietnam: The identification of another North Vietnamese regiment, the "Quyet Tam" regiment, four months after its reported arrival in South Vietnam, again demonstrates that North Vietnamese units in South Vietnam are normally identified only after engagement in combat and that their infiltration into the south cannot be confirmed on a current basis. We continue to believe, [redacted]

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[redacted] that a high level of infiltration has been continuing since the last firmly identified North Vietnamese regiments arrived in late October or early November. [redacted]

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There is also growing evidence that at least some infiltrated North Vietnamese regiments are comprised not only of infantry battalions but also include organic regimental support companies (AA, mortar, transport, etc), and that the regiments are subordinate to "field front" or task force tactical headquarters, which in some cases also include Viet Cong units. [redacted]

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Within recent weeks, [redacted] a general southward movement of major commands and North Vietnamese regiments in Military Region V. The 325th Division "Front" Headquarters and elements of at least two of its regiments have moved from Pleiku into Darlac Province, and a similar southward movement has been evident in the coastal provinces. The reported southward move of the North Vietnamese 6th Regiment from Quang Tin to Quang Ngai Province would leave no identified North Vietnamese units in the four northern provinces. These moves are suggestive of a coordinated strategy and plan of operations in the coastal and highlands areas. [redacted]

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[redacted] a plan to step up the strength of the Communist party element of the Viet Cong political apparatus in Saigon as well as plans to form stronger military forces in the capital area by mid-1966 to exploit the situation in the city if another coup should disorganize government forces there. Pending such an opportunity, the political task reportedly will be to exploit existing economic and social problems in the cities. An article in the January issue of the Communist party theoretical journal for South Vietnam clearly set forth party orders to blunt government efforts at pacification in rural areas and to organize and coordinate anti-regime activities in the cities. [redacted]

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4. Laos: Strong Communist forces, believed to be mostly North Vietnamese troops, on 18 February overran the important government base and air strip at Na Khang in Sam Neua Province. Government reinforcements are being moved into Muong Hiem, a few miles to the northwest, which will probably be the next target of the Communist attacks. If the Communist forces are able to secure Route 6, they will have an alternate supply route from North Vietnam into the Plaine des Jarres area. [redacted]

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